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ABSTRACT

To determine whether the distribution of male and female main character roles (sex dominance) differed significantly in the 1976-1978 editions of basal readers and supplementary textbooks from that found in the 1974-1976 editions examined by Gwyneth E. Britton and Margaret C. Lumpkin, an analysis of more than 3,700 stories was undertaken. The sex dominance of a story was determined by identifying the main character and by examining the accompanying illustrations. Each story was then classified as "male dominant," "female dominant," or "other." The resulting data showed that the 1976-1978 textbooks had a much smaller number of stories classified as "male dominant" than did the 1974-1976 editions. The newer editions also showed a marked increase in the number of stories classified as "other" and as "female dominant." (FL)

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An Extension of the Britton/Lumpkin Study: A Review of Recently Published Readers for Sex Dominance

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An Extension of the Britton/Lumpkin Study:
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In the last decade parents, educators, writers, and publishers have expressed great concern with sex bias in children's literature, especially in basal and supplementary reading series. Parents have formed ad hoc organizations and pressured teachers, curriculum directors, and school boards to end the use of sexist material in the classroom. Anderson (1976) reports that at Evanston, Illinois parents formed the Cornelia Wheadon Task Force on the Socialization of Children, and with grant monies from the Roy Gillet Foundation developed workshops aimed at identifying sexist material. Feminist groups, borrowing techniques and approaches from civil rights groups, also have become a formidable force for change. Some of their accomplishments are worth noting. Similar to the efforts of parents, feminists have developed guidelines for textbook evaluation and conducted workshops for teachers, administrators, and parents outlining the short-comings of sexist content. Lipton (1976) chronicles the effects of Baltimore, Maryland feminists, who employed guidelines formulated by the Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators to evaluate basal readers and to conduct workshops outlining methods of detecting and eliminating sexist material from the classroom. Nationally, the adoption of resolutions at national organizations calling for an end to sexism in schools has had an impact on education. The NEA (1975), for example, utilized the Ema Willard Task Force in the development of its "Checklist for Selecting and Evaluating U.S. History Textbooks." Other organizations have called upon publishers, writers, and all parties concerned to re-evaluate what is inserted in texts submitted for public

consumption. Concerned with the criticism leveled at reading texts, publishers also have directed their efforts at eliminating sex biased material. Following the examples of Scott, Foresman and Company (1972, 1974), and Macmillan (1975), publishing houses have developed guidelines targeted for authors and agencies responsible for the development and selection of stories and poems included in readers.

Not to be ignored are the efforts of educators. At the local level and similar to the efforts of parents, teachers have formulated guidelines and have focused on evaluating materials and refining instruments to more effectively measure for sexism. Graebner (1972) examined 554 stories in two major basal reading series to gauge whether school readers reflect the changing female role in society. Graebner compared stories appearing in 1961, 1962, and 1963 edition readers with 1969 and 1971 edition readers. Graebner found that boys outnumbered girls as major characters in the earlier and later editions, 71% and 75% respectively and boys outnumbered the girls in illustrations, in both the earlier and later editions, 58% and 67.5% respectively. Other statistics compiled covered various characteristics common to each sex -- type of clothing as well as psychological traits. Graebner found that there was a slight tendency toward more sex stereotyping in the new readers. She concluded that there had been no effort to make the activities of males and females any less typed by sex between 1961 and 1971. Hillman (1974) conducted a similar study comparing the 1930's texts and the mid 1960's to mid 1970's texts. Hillman found that there were more males than females in the contemporary texts. Characteristically, males were shown to be physically aggressive and competent in both periods, while females exhibited the characteristics suggesting dependence. Although Hillman found masculine and

feminine stereotypic traits she did feel that the progress had been made between 1930 and mid-1970's. Saario, Jacklin, and Little (1973) in their study also found basal reading texts to be sexist. They concluded that the stereotypic portrayal of male and female roles - child and adult - increased with grade level.

Instead of analysing basal readers, Weitzman (1972) chose to analyze trade books awarded the Caldecott Medal. Weitzman examined books published since 1936 but focused on the 1967-1972 Caldecott Winners and runners-up. She examined over two hundred trade books and found females underrepresented in story titles, major roles and illustrations. In examining the role models, not one woman in the Caldecott sample had a job or profession other than home economist. Weitzman found the phenomenon to be incredible considering 40% of the labor force is comprised of women. She found that the Caldecott Award books did not present a realistic picture of what women do. She felt women were portrayed in dull, stereotypic traditional sex roles.

Unfortunately, young children's literature is not the only literature that apparently is sexist. Wiik (1973) in her study of 450 textbooks containing literature selections for adolescents found that the literature did not provide the adolescent female a realistic picture of adult life. She commented: Young women will not be freed from low aspirations and second class economic status without a change in the literature which socializes them" (p. 229). In another analysis using adult readers Coles (1973) examined for steoeotypic portrayals of males and females. Women and non-whites, he concluded, are "presented in predominately subordinate and stereotypic roles, and white males are largely portrayed as dominant, active, and competent figures" (p. 57).

The Britton/Lumpkin Study, (1977) represents the latest effort in textbook evaluation for sex bias. The aim of the study was to measure whether sex biased material in basal readers was being eliminated. In a comparative analysis the researchers reviewed 38 readers and social studies texts published between 1958-1970 and 11 textbooks published between 1974-76. Britton/Lumpkin hypothesized that there would be less instances of sex biased material in the 1974-76 group of texts than in the earlier texts. The underlying assumption was that by 1974 authors and publishers had adopted and were employing some kind of instrument to detect and eliminate sex bias material from readers.

In the comparative analysis the researchers:

1. counted male/female character roles,
2. counted and listed male/female career roles,
3. counted ethnic male/female career roles,
4. counted and listed ethnic male/female career roles (p. 42).

Over 4,300 selections were examined in the initial analysis (1958-70). The results show males as major role characters in 60 percent of the stories and females in 14 percent of the stories. (Selections with male and female main characters and animal stories were assigned to the category "Other"). Over 3200 selections were examined in the second analysis (1974-76). The results are strikingly similar and reveal no significant proportional change in sex dominance classification. Identification of career roles also reveals little change. For example, in the "1976 edition of Ginn and Company Reading 720 series . . . males of all races are shown in 249 different career roles or 84 percent. . ." (p. 44). Clearly, with respect to major character and career roles males remain dominant; females have made no significant progress in overcoming the sex related imbalance

found in 1956-70 textbook series. As the two researchers suggest:

> Changes have been minimal; the 'new' product appears to be teaching the same 'hidden curriculum' as the preceding series. The great disparity remains between male/female representation as major characters in textbook series (p. 44).

The purpose of this investigation was to review for sex dominance in 1976, 1977, and 1978 edition basal and supplementary readers appearing in the Britton/Lumpkin Study. The prime objective was to gauge whether percentage breakdown of "Male Dominant" "Female Dominant," and "Other" stories as reflected in the 1974-76 readers evaluated by Britton/Lumpkin were generalizable to readers published between 1976-78. The following question was addressed.

1. Is there a significant difference between the 1974-76 readers reviewed by Britton and Lumpkin and the 1976-78 readers reviewed by Garcia and Longnion?

Although this hypothesis was the major research question of the study, the researchers felt it was also important to investigate for differences among the publishing companies.

2. Is there a significant difference among 1976-78 readers with respect to sex character dominance?

Procedures.

All texts treated were obtained using an approved strategy. Reading series were obtained by corresponding by telephone with publishers appearing in the Britton/Lumpkin Study. Publishers were informed of the Britton/Lumpkin Study and the objectives of this research endeavor. Those companies marketing 1976, 1977, and 1978 edition reading series were requested to submit a copy of their series for examination. Fifteen publishing houses were identified as having 1976, 1977, and 1978 reading

series and all fifteen submitted a sample or a complete reading series for examination. When reading series were not identified as basal or supplementary, publishers were contacted for clarification.

When reviewing the readers the researchers turned to the table of contents of each text and listed all stories onto a review sheet. The researchers then turned and reviewed each story and identified each as "Male Dominant", Female Dominant", or "Other". In determining the sex dominance of a story the researchers relied on identifying the main character of a story and accompanying illustrations. Specifically, the researchers counted dominance when main characters exhibited "action" on the environment and were central characters in the story. The following qualifications were adhered to when treating the readers:

1. exercises, poems, and riddles though describing a male or female were not treated;
2. stories with animals as major characters and stories with male and female major characters were categorized as "Other";
3. stories describing subjects whose sex was not defined were tabulated as "Other";
4. a series of stories with a continuous plot was treated as one story;
5. stories slotted under a general theme, were treated separately.

Analysis.

Table 1 and Table 2 provide frequency counts and percentages employed to investigate the major research question. It is clear that the Garcia/Longnion study found the 1976-78 reading texts to have a much smaller number of stories classified as "Male Dominant" and many more stories classified in the "Other" category than the Britton/Lumpkin study. A 2 x 3 chi-square goodness of fit analysis was performed to investigate the significance of these differences (Popham, 1967).

The obtained x^2 = 155219, df - 2, was significant at the .01 level. The results support the first hypothesis that the Britton/Lumpkin and Garcia/Longnion are different in the proportion of "Female-Dominant," "Male-Dominant," and "Other" stories reviewed.

[Insert Table 1, Table 2]

[Insert Table 3]

When one examines Table 4 it is apparent that there are differences in the proportion of "Female Dominant," "Male Dominant," and "Other" stories among the publishers. A 15 x 3 chi-square analysis was performed to investigate for significant differences. The obtained x^2 = 554.4, df = 28, was significant at the .01 level. The statistical analysis reveals significant differences in the proportion of "Female Dominant," "Male Dominant," and "Other" stories among the 1976-1978 publishers.

[Insert Table 4]

Discussion

An analysis of the data supports the hypothesis that the nature of reading texts have changed in the last few years. In the Britton/Lumpkin study, the researchers found the majority of the stories to be classified as "Male Dominant." The Garcia and Longnion evaluation of over 3700 stories revealed a marked increase in "Other" stories, an increase in Female Dominant stories, and a significant decrease in "Male Dominant" stories. This finding suggests publishers and story writers are adhering to a new set of criteria when earmarking a particular story for inclusion in a reading series. It may be, as Britton and Lumpkin hypothesized when reviewing 1974-76 readers, that guidelines and standards for the elimination of sexism in readers published by Scott Foresman and others are having an effect on publishers and writers.

It is important to note that while there are differences in the 1974-76 readers analyzed and the 1976-78 readers analyzed, there are also differences in the proportion among the 15 publishers. In other words, publishing companies differed significantly in their proportion of "Male Dominant," "Female Dominant," and "Other" stories. One cannot assume that since the nature of reading texts have changed as a group that all publishing companies have responded in a similar fashion.

It is also important to note, as the findings are discussed, a recently completed study which examined the literature on sexism. Kingston and Lovelace (1977) identified a reoccurring theme reached by researchers reviewing for sex bias in instructional material: Sex biased stories in readers are harmful to learners. Similar to Britton and Lumpkin, these studies concluded that children accept as "real" and internalize as "appropriate," images of females appearing in reading series. The

majority of the studies focused on the "hidden curriculum" and intimated that children, as they learn specific knowledge and skills, also learn "appropriate" and established female and male roles. Supposedly, instructional literature provides the learner with little choice. Females are portrayed as home economists, teachers, secretaries, nurses, and rarely in other roles; males on the other hand, are portrayed in a variety of roles including those deemed highly desirable and highly appropriate. Ultimately it is the slotting of individuals into prescribed roles that proponents for the reduction of sex biased material find objectionable.

However, as Kingston and Lovelace suggest in their exhaustive review of the literature on sexism, little evidence is provided to support the allegation that sexist behavior is learned from readers. Most studies reviewed restricted their investigations to reading series and trade books employed in the classroom. The thrust of a majority of these investigations was to count the number of times females appear in illustrations, the number of times they appear as major characters, and the variety of roles and emotions displayed by the targeted group. A reading series projecting a distorted image of females was thought to be harmful to children. Unfortunately few researchers defined what was meant by "harmful" and failed to discriminate between sexist behavior apparently learned from readers and sexist behavior learned elsewhere. What effect, if any, does mass media, peer influence, and family background have on what children perceive as appropriate roles and behavior for females and males?

Kingston and Lovelace identified other issues related to sexism which have been largely unexplored. Few researchers, for example, have focused on measuring the effect, if any, sexist literature has on

learning and motivation. Are learners less motivated to read when presented with material they consider "silly" and "unrealistic"? Similarly, little attention has been directed at measuring the effect, if any, sexist literature has on the self-concept and sex role development of the learner. Do reading series which limit portrayals of females to nurses and teachers impede the development of a positive self-concept and sex role among female learners? Definitive responses to these questions are essential before the textbook industry is encouraged to re-write reading series.

Recommendations

It is important to describe as this study has done, that there has been a change in 1976-1978 readers. To determine whether or not such a change is positive should be investigated. In light of the findings of this study and in response to Kingston and Lovelace's essay the following recommendations are presented. The recommendations are comprehensive and are aimed at individuals and agencies responsible for content and content evaluation of readers.

First, clear identification of readers is essential if evaluation is to be effective and accurate. Before criticizing the individual publishing companies for readers which are too "Male Dominant", "Female Dominant" or "Other," it would be important to ask the question: Who is the intended audience for the particular reading series. For instance, since so many remedial reading classes have more male students (Maccoby, 1974), it would make sense to have supplemental readers that include greater "Male Dominant" stories. For students who have a narrow experiential base, it might be helpful to have a reader that provides a heavy dosage of concept building information. It is often difficult to discern publishing companies' intended audience and for what purposes

the texts were developed. In light of this finding, it would be helpful for publishing companies to note in their brochure and catalogs the necessary information so teachers, school districts, state boards could make responsible decisions about proper selection of texts.

Second, researchers need to better address the issue of sexism. This study, for example, identified an inordinate amount of "Other" studies. The "Other" category consisted of animal stories, female and male dominant stories,and concept building stories. Many of these stories described females. However, female and male character stories do not necessarily reduce sex bias in readers. "Other" stories can provide prominence to the interplay between females and males but do not necessarily stress interaction among females. In effect, reading series with an inordinate amount of "Other" stories may include a greater depiction of females but not necessarily a less sexist one.

Third, publishers need to provide a rationale for the substantive increase in the number of "Other" stories. Such a rational should include a thorough discussion outlining how student learning and motivation are affected:

1. Are children likely to be more motivated to learn from "Other" stories than from "Female Dominant" and "Male Dominant" stories?

2. Are children likely to learn more from reading "Other" stories than from "Female Dominant" and "Male Dominant" stories?

Similarly, a dialogue concerning "Other" stories must address the issue of sexism:

1. Do "Other" stories which include androgynous characters provide experiences for learners which promote healthy sex development?

2. Do "Other" stories provide learners with a realistic portrayal of males and females?

These questions and others must remain central as publishers and researchers attempt to establish the effectiveness of contemporary readers.

Fourth, sexism if it is to be properly understood must include addressing incidental learning and its effect on children. Kingston and Lovelace limit their criticisms to sex biased material and its effect on motivation and formal learning. Such a narrow interpretation of sexism ignores the incidental learning which occurs in most classrooms. Children learning key concepts and skills from a reading series may also learn other information. Students, for example, as they learn about occupations may also learn that females are suited for specific occupations and males for others. Some of that incidental learning may suggest that the more prestigious roles are reserved for males.

Furthermore, if it is found that sex biased material reinforces learner sexist behavior such material should be deleted or counter-balanced with stories describing females in other roles. Re-writing readers would not necessarily lead to saccharine learning as Kingston and Lovelace suggest. Saccharine reading surfaces when publishers confuse educational goals with political and monetary objectives. Merely addressing sexism by including stories describing females as mechanics, firepersons, and railroad engineers is similar to the short-sighted technique employed by publishers in 1960's to solve another issue. However, publishers who seriously address the issue of sexism can provide learners with quality readers which do not sacrifice one distorted portrayal of females for another.

Finally, publishers need to continue promoting research in the area of sexism. The Kingston and Lovelace criticisms of research techniques in the area of evaluation of instructional material for sexism are noteworthy and must be taken seriously if investigations in this field are to remain reputable. Researchers working in concert with others need to develop operational definitions of sexism, and appropriate instruments

and procedures which can effectively measure sexism in instructional material. If research in the area of sexism is to continue, a rationale free of emotional remarks and pre-conceived notions of what should be in instructional literature need to be identified. Once a base is established valid and reliable instruments can be created. Sophisticated research designs which include experimental and control groups also are needed to investigate what impact sex biased material has on student motivation and learning. Evaluation for sexism which is unscientific provides little direction to those who seek evidence outlining the limitations of sex biased material. Moreover, such "research" carries little credibility in the educational community.

Where do we go from here? Essentially educators, parents, publishers, and other interest groups need to continue promoting research in the area of sexism. However, the focus of attention must be re-directed from analysis of instructional materials to analysis of learner and curricular material.

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Table 1 Frequency of Sex Dominance in Stories Examined by Britton/Lumpkin and Garcia/Longnion

	Female Dominant	Male Dominant	Other	Total
Britton/Lumpkin (1974-1976)	521	1986	749	3256
Garcia/Longnion (1976-1978)	689	1262	1834	3785

Table 2 Results Expressed in Percentages of Sex Dominance in Stories Examined by Britton/Lumpkin and Garcia/Longnion

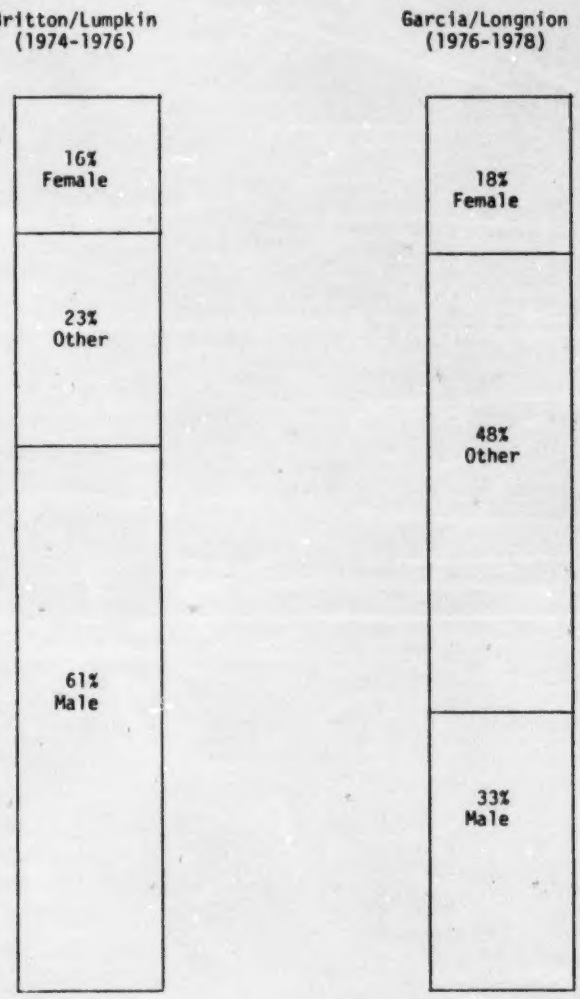

Table 3 Sex Dominance Expressed in Percentage of Stories in Basal and Supplementary Readers Published Since 1976

Basal	Female Dominant	Male Dominant	Other
Benziger Reading Metro Edition (1976)	16.0	48.1	35.7
Harper and Row Reading Basics Plus (1976)	29.1	31.7	39.0
Open Court Open Court Basic Readers (1976)	18.5	33.8	47.6
Science Research Associates Basic Reading Series (1976)	9.7	24.3	65.9
Holt, Rinehart and Winston Basic Reading System (1977)	22.1	34.6	43.1
Allyn and Bacon Pathfinder Series (1978)	28.2	27.6	44.0
Economy Keytext Program (1978)	19.8	17.3	62.8
Rand McNally Young America Basic Series (1978)	23.1	35.0	41.8
Scott, Foresman and Co. Basics in Reading (1978)	22.9	22.9	54.1
Supplementary			
Benefic Press Horses and Heroines (1975) Helicopter Adventure Series (1976) Target Today Series (1976) Ranger Don Series (1978)	18.4	63.9	17.6
Globe Book Co. Reading Road to Writing (1977)	16.6	47.2	36.1
Imperial Int. Learning Corp. Specific Reading Skills (1977)	2.6	21.9	75.3
Reader's Digest Reading Skill Builder-Silver Ed. (1977)	16.0	29.2	54.7
Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. New Cornerstone Readers (1978)	11.5	17.6	70.7
Random House Structural Reading Program (1978)	17.3	28.0	54.0

Table 4. Frequency of Sex Dominance in Stories Appearing in Basal and Supplementary Readers Published Since 1976

Basal	Female Dominant	Male Dominant	Other	Total
Benziger Reading Metro Edition (1976)	22	66	49	137
Harper and Row Reading Basics Plus (1976)	68	74	91	233
Open Court Open Court Basic Readers (1976)	35	64	90	189
Science Research Associates Basic Reading Series (1976)	19	48	130	197
Holt, Rinehart and Winston Basic Reading System (1977)	55	86	107	248
Allyn and Bacon Pathfinder Series (1978)	95	93	148	336
Economy Keytext Program (1978)	24	21	76	121
Rand McNally Young American Basic Series (1978)	88	133	159	380
Scott, Foresman and Co. Basics in Reading	81	81	191	353
Total	487	666	1041	2194
Supplementary				
Benefic Press Heroes and Heroines (1975) Helicopter Adventures Series (1976) Target Today Series (1976) Ranger Don Series (1978)	93	323	89	505
Globe Book Co. Reading Road to Writing (1977)	6	17	13	36
Imperial Int. Learning Corp Specific Reading Skills (1977)	12	100	343	455
Reader's Digest Reading Skill Builder-Silver Ed. (1977)	46	84	157	287
Addison-Wesley Pub. Co. New Cornerstone Readers (1978)	17	26	104	147
Random House Structural Reading Program (1978)	28	46	87	161
Total	202	596	793	1591